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SIPDIS

VIENNA FOR BOSNIA

E.O. 12356: N/A
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [HR](#) [HR](#) [HR](#) [HR](#) [BK](#)
SUBJECT: A/S SHATTUCK AND CROATIAN HUMAN RIGHTS
ACTIVISTS ASSESS "THE HUMAN RIGHTS CATASTROPHE" IN THE
FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

SUMMARY

1. IN AN EXTRAORDINARILY INFORMATIVE AND SOMETIMES
EMOTIONAL JANUARY 7 MEETING HOSTED BY AMBASSADOR
GALBRAITH, HA A/S SHATTUCK AND LEADING HUMAN RIGHTS
SPOKESMEN IN CROATIA DISCUSSED WHAT A/S SHATTUCK CALLED
"THE HUMAN RIGHTS CATASTROPHE" IN THE FORMER
YUGOSLAVIA. IN A BROAD-RANGING CONVERSATION LASTINC
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MORE THAN AN HOUR, THE MEETING PARTICIPANTS ADDRESSED
THE ISSUES OF MISSING PERSONS, WAR CRIMES AND THE
HORRIFIC USE OF GENOCIDE AND ETHNIC CLEANSING AS
EFFECTIVE TOOLS OF CONQUEST AT THE END OF THE 20TH
CENTURY. A/S SHATTUCK UNDERSCORED THE U.S. COMMITMENT
TO A WAR CRIMES TRIBUNAL TO BRING RESPONSIBLE
INDIVIDUALS TO JUSTICE AND TO PRESSURE ALL SIDES IN THE
CONFLICT TO RESPECT BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS. END SUMMARY.

PARTICIPANTS

2. CROATIAN PARTICIPANTS INCLUDED MS. LJUBICA BUTULA,
PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIETY OF FAMILIES OF MISSING AND
IMPRISONED DEFENDERS OF CROATIA; DR. ZVONIMIR
SEPAROVIC, PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR VICTIMOLOGY
AND GENOCIDE; PROFESSOR DRAGO ROKSANDIC, A UNIVERSITY
PROFESSOR AND SPOKESMAN FOR SERB MINORITY RIGHTS IN
CROATIA; DR. SLAVKO GOLDSTEIN, PUBLISHER AND VETERAN
HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST; AND DR. SLOBODAN LANG, SPECIAL
ADVISOR ON HUMANITARIAN ISSUES TO THE PRESIDENT OF
CROATIA. A/S SHATTUCK AND AMBASSADOR GALBRAITH WERE
THE AMERICAN INTERLOCUTORS, AND THE EMBASSY CONSUL WAS
NOTETAKER. THE MEETING'S DISCUSSION IS REPORTED HERE
BY TOPICS FOR CLARITY'S SAKE.

OPENING REMARKS

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3. A/S SHATTUCK SAID HE HAD COME TO CROATIA WITH UN
AMBASSADOR ALBRIGHT TO FOCUS ATTENTION ON THE "HUMAN
RIGHTS CATASTROPHE" UNFOLDING IN THE REGION, AND TO
UNDERSCORE AMERICAN COMMITMENT TO ESTABLISHMENT OF A
VIGOROUS INTERNATIONAL WAR CRIME TRIBUNAL. A/S
SHATTUCK INDICATED THE USG IS OFFERING USD 28 MILLION
TO FUND THE TRIBUNAL BECAUSE THE U.S. BELIEVES THAT ALL
ATROCITIES COME DOWN ULTIMATELY TO INDIVIDUAL
RESPONSIBILITY, AND INDIVIDUALS MUST BE HELD TO
ACCOUNT. THE DISCUSSION WAS THEN TURNED OVER TO THE

CROATIAN GUESTS FOR THEIR COMMENTS ON A RANGE OF
ISSUES, INCLUDING MISSING PERSONS, WAR CRIMES, THE
MEDIA AS A WEAPON AND THE USES OF GENOCIDE AND ETHNIC
CLEANSING AS TOOLS OF CONQUEST.

THE MISSING

14. LJUBICA BUTUTLA SAID HER ORGANIZATION REPRESENTS

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SUMMARY

FAMILIES FROM ALL OVER CROATIA, AND HAS DETAILS ON
8,000 CASES OF PERSONS MISSING IN THE WAR, ALTHOUGH
THEY ESTIMATE UP TO 11,000 MAY BE MISSING. (N.B. DR.
SEPAROVIC NOTED THAT THE CROATIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALLY
LISTS 7,000 MISSING, BUT HIS INSTITUTE BELIEVES THE
NUMBER MAY BE AS HIGH AS 15,000.) SHE SPOKE OF VUKOVAR

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-- THE LOVELY DANUBE CITY THAT WAS LEVELLED BY SERBIAN
AND YUGOSLAV ARMY FORCES EARLY IN THE 1991 WAR. TWO
HUNDRED AND SIXTY SICK AND INJURED PEOPLE WERE REMOVED
BY SERBS FROM THE CITY HOSPITAL IN THE PRESENCE OF RED
CROSS OBSERVERS, DRIVEN AWAY ON BUSES, AND NEVER SEEN
AGAIN, BUTULA SAID.

15. BUTULA'S OWN SON -- A FORMER EXCHANGE STUDENT IN
OHIO -- WENT MISSING DURING THE WAR. SHE WAS ONLY ABLE
TO LOCATE AND REGAIN HIS REMAINS AFTER MANY MONTHS OF
FRUSTRATING AND EXHAUSTIVE EFFORTS VIA THE RED CROSS
AND OTHER ENTITIES. BUTULA RECALLED THE AGONY OF
UNCERTAINTY, AND INSISTED THAT SERB REFUSAL TO ACCOUNT
FOR THE DEAD AMONG THE MISSING CONSTITUTED "A KIND OF
PSYCHOLOGICAL WAR AGAINST CROATIAN WOMEN." BUTULA SAID
HER ORGANIZATION DID NOT BELIEVE THAT THE INTERNATIONAL
COMMUNITY -- NOTABLY THE RED CROSS -- WAS DOING ENOUGH
TO INSIST ON FULL ACCOUNTING OF MISSING PERSONS.

16. AMBASSADOR GALBRAITH OBSERVED THAT A KEY STEP IN
ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM IS TO CONTINUE TO PUBLICIZE IT
WIDELY, AND TO THAT END, THE VISIT ON JANUARY 6 BY
AMBASSADOR ALBRIGHT AND A/S SHATTUCK TO VUKOVAR AND AN
IDENTIFIED MASS GRAVE SITE NEARBY HAD REFOCUSSED
INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION ON WHAT HAPPENED THERE.

ATROCITIES AND ETHNIC CLEANSING

17. DR. SEPAROVIC LED THE GROUP INTO A GENERAL
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DISCUSSION OF WAR CRIMES AND ATROCITIES BY STATING THAT
MOST SUCH ACTS IN THIS CONFLICT HAVE FLOWED FROM THE
DELIBERATE STRATEGY OF ETHNIC CLEANSING, A MODERN
ELABORATION ON THE ANCIENT TACTIC OF LAND CONQUEST
THROUGH TERROR. DR. LANG AGREED THAT THIS HAD BEEN THE
SIMPLE AND RUTHLESSLY EFFECTIVE PLAN OF THE SERBS FROM
THE OUTSET, THOUGH LATER IMITATED BY OTHER SIDES. "AT
THE END OF THIS CENTURY IT HAS BEEN SHOWN THAT GENOCIDE
IS REALLY THE MOST PROFITABLE FORM OF AGGRESSION," LANG
ADDED.

18. MR. GOLDSTEIN FOCUSED ON MASS RAPE AS A
PARTICULARLY NEW AND HORRIFIC ELEMENT OF THESE TACTICS
AND OPINED THAT "RAPE AS A MASS EVENT" IS A DIRECTED
AND SYSTEMATIC EFFORT, THOUGH THAT IS DIFFICULT TO
PROVE. TO MAKE THE POINT, HE OBSERVED THAT EVEN IN THE
BARBAROUS STRUGGLE BETWEEN USTASHA, CHETNIK AND
PARTISAN FORCES IN WORLD WAR II, MASS RAPE HAD NOT
FIGURED PROMINENTLY AMONG THE MANY ATROCITIES
COMMITTED. (AMBASSADOR GALBRAITH NOTED THAT GOLDSTEIN

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SUMMARY

SPOKE WITH SOME AUTHORITY, AS HE HAD BEEN A YOUNG
PARTISAN FIGHTER DURING THE WAR.)

THE MEDIA AS WEAPON

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9. PROFESSOR ROKSANDIC SPOKE AT LENGTH ON THE ROLE OF
THE MEDIA AS A WEAPON OF WAR AND THE SIGNAL INSTIGATION
TO THIS ETHNIC CONFLICT. THE USE OF MASS MEDIA AT THE
OUTSET AND THROUGHOUT THE WARS IN CROATIA AND BOSNIA-
HERZEGOVINA TO FAN ETHNIC SUSPICIONS AND ANXIETIES INTO
ACTS OF VIOLENCE IS, IN ITSELF, A WAR CRIME, ROKANDIC
ARGUED. A/S SHATTUCK TOOK THE POINT FURTHER, ASKING IF
ROKANDIC WAS SUGGESTING A DELIBERATE EXPLOITATION OF
MEDIA BY SERB LEADER MILOSEVIC IN PARTICULAR, AND THAT
SUCH TACTICS SHOULD COME WITHIN THE AUTHORITY OF THE
WAR CRIMES TRIBUNAL. ROKSANDIC SAID THAT IT SHOULD BE
INVESTIGATED.

10. LANG AGREED AND EXPANDED ON THIS THEME.
ASSESSMENTS THAT THE CONFLICT IN FORMER YUGOSLAVIA WAS
AN INEVITABILITY OWING TO CERTAIN TRAITS AMONG "THE
BALKAN PRIMITIVES" ARE "RACIST AND DECEPTIVE," LANG
SAID. THIS IDEA -- CIRCULATED WIDELY IN WESTERN MEDIA
AND AMONG POLICY ANALYSTS -- CONTRIBUTED TO
INTERNATIONAL INACTION IN THE CRISIS AND HENCE WAS
POSSIBLY FUELED BY SERB PROPAGANDA EFFORTS.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

11. THE GROUP AGREED THAT ONGOING EFFORTS TO INTERRUPT
HUMANITARIAN AID CONVOYS IN THE REGION CONSTITUTED A
WAR CRIME AGAINST CIVILIAN POPULATIONS AND THAT THIS
WAS ONE AREA IN WHICH ACTION COULD STILL BE TAKEN TO

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SAVE LIVES, NOT JUST EXACT RETRIBUTION AFTER THE FACT.

12. THEY ALSO AGREED THAT OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS CONTINUE UNABATED AND MUST BE STOPPED, BUT LANG OBSERVED THAT HUMAN RIGHTS DISCUSSIONS IN THE BALKANS NOW OFTEN BECOME BOGGED DOWN IN ARGUMENTS ABOUT "WHO IS MORE VICTIMIZED," WHICH OBSCURE PRIORITIES AND STUNT EFFECTIVE ACTION.

13. A/S SHATTUCK AND AMBASSADOR GALBRAITH ASKED THE GROUP TO COMMENT ON U.S. INSISTENCE THAT MINORITY RIGHTS ARE KEY TO ANY PEACE PROCESS, AND MUST BE OBSERVED BOTH IN LAW AND IN FACT. ROKSANDIC AGREED BUT SAID "THAT DISCUSSION HAS NOT YET TAKEN PLACE" IN CROATIA BETWEEN CROATS AND THE ELEMENTS OF THE SERB MINORITY WHICH DESIRE PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE. "REAL DEMOCRATIZATION" IS THE PRECURSOR TO SUCH A DIALOGUE, AND ONLY TRULY DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS -- NOTABLY A FAIR JUDICIARY -- CAN PROVIDE THE ASSURANCES

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SUMMARY

MINORITIES WILL NEED TO FEEL SAFE AGAIN IN THE BALKANS,
ROKSANDIC OPINED.

14. "A FRANKENSTEIN WAS CREATED HERE," LANG OBSERVED
IN CONCLUSION. ALL MEMBERS OF THE GROUP AGREED THAT
FAILURE TO DEAL FIRMLY WITH THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR
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MASSIVE ETHNIC WARFARE AND ITS ATTENDENT ATROCITIES
WILL SEND THE WRONG SIGNALS ABOUT INTERNATIONAL RESOLVE
FOR OTHER CONFLICTS THAT ARE EVEN NOW BOILING OVER.

15. A/S SHATTUCK RE-EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF
BRINGING TO JUSTICE THOSE WHO ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR WAR
CRIMES, BUT HE ALSO STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF DUE
PROCESS AND LEGAL RIGOR IN MAKING THE CASES. IF
INDIVIDUALS RESPONSIBLE FOR CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY CAN
BE BROUGHT TO LEGAL ACCOUNT IN A CIVILIZED PROCESS,
"THEN THEY HAVE NOT WON," SHATTUCK SAID.

GALBRAITH

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